

R. La Fotherie (1780)
The BIBLE and the SWORD:

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THE APPOINTMENT OF
THE
GENERAL FAST
VINDICATED:

In an Address to the Common People,

CONCERNING

THE PROPRIETY OF REPRESSING OBSTINATE
LICENTIOUSNESS WITH THE SWORD, AND OF
FASTING WHEN THE SWORD IS DRAWN
FOR THAT PURPOSE.

"From all Sedition, privy Conspiracy, and Rebellion, Good
"Lord deliver us." [*And, in order to this we pray*] "That it
"may please Thee to give the Magistrates grace to EXECUTE
Justice." *Litany.*

He [*the supreme Magistrate*] beareth not the SWORD in vain:
for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to EXECUTE
wrath upon him that doeth evil. Rom. xiii. 4.

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in Town and Country. 1776.



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THE APPOINTMENT OF
THE
GENERAL FAST
VINDICATED.

My dear Fellow-subjects

IN a late publication*, too large and too dear for common readers, we find the following observations.

‘Dr. PRICE, the champion of the American Patriots, has advanced an argument, which deserves the attention of all, who wish well to church and state: Take it in his own words.’—“ In this hour of tremendous danger, it would become us to turn our thoughts to heaven. This is what our brethren in the Colonies are doing. From one end of North America to the other, they are FASTING and PRAYING. But what are we doing?—Shocking thought! we are ridiculing them as *fanatics*, and scoffing at religion. We are running wild after pleasure, and forgetting every thing serious and decent at masquerades. We are gambling in gaming houses; trafficking for boroughs; perjuring ourselves at elections; and selling ourselves for places. Which side then is Providence likely to favour? In *America* we see a number of rising
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“ *American Patriotism* confronted with Reason, Scripture and the Constitution.” Price Nine-pence.

states in the vigour of youth, and animated by PIETY. Here we see an old state, inflated and IRRELIGIOUS, enervated by luxury, and hanging by a thread. Can we look without pain on the issue?"

‘ There is more solidity in this argument, than in all that Dr. Price has advanced. If the Colonists throng the houses of God, while we throng play-houses, or houses of ill fame; if they crowd their communion-tables, while we crowd the gaming table or the festal board; if they pray, while we curse; if they fast, while we get drunk; and keep the sabbath, while we pollute it; if they shelter under the protection of heaven, while our chief attention is turned to our troops; we are in danger—in *great* danger. Be our cause ever so good, and our force ever so formidable; our case is bad, and our success doubtful. Nay, *the Lord of hosts*, who, of old, sold his disobedient people into the hands of their unrighteous enemies, to chastise and humble them,—this righteous Lord, may give success to the arms of the Colonies, to punish *them* for their revolt, and *us* for our prophaneness. A youth that believes and prays as David, is a match for a giant that swaggers and curses as Goliath. And they that, in the name of the Lord, *enthusiastically* encounter their enemies in a *bad* cause, bid fairer for success than they that, in a *good* cause, *prophanely* go into the field; trusting only in the apparent strength of an arm of flesh. To disregard the *king's* righteous commands, as the Colonists do, is bad: But to despise the first-table commandments of the *King of kings*, as we do, is still worse. Nor do I see how we can answer it, either to reason or our own consciences, to be so *intent* on forcing British laws, and so *remiss* in yielding obedience to the laws of God.’

‘ Is it not surprizing, that amidst all the preparations, which have been made to subdue the revolted Colonies, none should have been made to check
our

our open rebellion against the *King of kings*; and that in all our national applications to foreign princes for help, we should have forgotten a public application to *the Prince of the kings of the earth*? Many well-wishers to their country flattered themselves, that at a time, when the British empire stands, as Dr. PRICE justly observes, “on an edge so perilous,” our superiors would have appointed a day of humiliation and prayer;—a day to confess the national sins, which have provoked God to let loose a spirit of political enthusiasm and revolt upon us;—a day to implore pardon for our past transgressions, and to resolve upon a more religious and loyal course of life;—a day to beseech the Father of lights and mercies to *teach* at this important juncture, *our senators wisdom* in a peculiar manner; and to inspire them with such steadiness and mildness, that by their prudence, courage, and condescension, the war may be ended with little effusion of blood; and, if possible, without shedding any more blood at all.—Thousands expected to see such a day; thinking that it becomes us, as reformed christians, nationally to address the throne of grace, and intreat God to turn the hearts of the Colonists towards us, and ours towards them, that we may speedily bury our mutual animosities in the grave of our common Saviour. And not a few supposed, that humanity bids us feel for the myriads of our fellow-creatures, who are going to offer up their lives in the field of battle; and that charity and piety require us to pray that they may penitently part with their sins, and solemnly prepare themselves for a safe passage, I shall not say from Britain to America; but, if they are called to it, from time into eternity.—Such, I say were the expectations of thousands, but hitherto their hopes and wishes have been disappointed.’

‘ Dr. PRICE knows how to avail himself of our omission or delay in this respect, to strengthen the hands of the American patriots, by insinuating,

that heaven will not be propitious to us ; and that “ *our cause is such, as gives us [no] reason to ask God to bless it.*” None can tell what fewel this plausible observation of his, will add to the wild fire of political enthusiasm, which burns already too fiercely in the breasts of thousands of injudicious religionists. I therefore humbly hope, that our governors will consider Dr. PRICE’s objection taken from our immorality and prophaneness ; and that they will let the world see, we are neither ashamed nor afraid to spread the justice of our cause before the Lord of hosts, and to implore his blessing upon the army going to America, to enforce gracious offers of mercy, and reasonable terms of reconciliation.’

‘ And why, after all, should we be ashamed of asking help of *God*, as well as of German princes ? Have we never read such awful scriptures as these ? ‘ Save us, O king of heaven, WHEN we call upon ‘ THEE. Some put their trust in chariots, and ‘ some in horses : But WE WILL remember the ‘ name of the Lord our God.—Blessed be my strong ‘ helper, who SUBDUETH the people unto me, ‘ and setteth me above mine adversaries.—Thro’ ‘ THEE will we overthrow our enemies, and in THY ‘ name will we tread them under that rise against ‘ us. For I will not trust in my bow : It is not my ‘ sword that shall [*comparatively*] help me.—Be not ‘ afraid of this * great multitude ; for the battle is ‘ not yours, but God’s—All the assembly shall ‘ know, that the Lord saveth not with sword and ‘ spear : For the battle is the LORD’s.’

‘ Our own history, as well as the scripture, confirms Dr. PRICE’s objection taken from our neglect of

* Dr. PRICE, speaking of the numbers of the Americans, says,
 “ To think of conquering that whole continent with 30,000 or
 “ 40,000 men, to be transported across the Atlantic, and sent
 “ from hence, and incapable of being recruited after any defeat
 “ —This is folly so great, that language does not afford a name
 “ for it.”

of the *religious* means of success in the present contest. It is well known to many, that in the civil wars of the last age, a national disregard of the Lord's day, and the avowed contempt of God's name, which prevailed in the king's party, did him unspeakable injury. For multitudes of men who feared God, seeing prophaneness reign in the army of the royalists, while religious duty was solemnly performed by the forces of the parliament; and being unable to enter into the political questions, whence the quarrel arose, judged of the cause according to religious appearances; and sided against the king, merely because they fancied that he sided against God. Nor were there wanting men of the greatest candour and penetration, who thought, that this was one of the principle causes of the overthrow of our church and state; Cromwell then availing himself of this appearance, as Dr. PRICE does now, to persuade *religious* people, that he was fighting the Lord's battles, and that opposing the king and the bishops, was only opposing tyranny and a prophane *hierarchy*.

The author, after supporting this assertion by divers quotations from the works of a judicious and pious historian of the last century, adds what follows:—' From this extract it appears, that Cromwell, like Dr. Price, rode the great horse *Religion*, as well as the great horse *Liberty*; and that the best way to counter-work the enthusiasm of patriotic religionists, is to do constitutional *Liberty* and scriptural *Religion* FULL JUSTICE; by defending the former against the attacks of *despotic monarchs* on the right hand, and *despotic mobs* on the left; and by preserving the latter from the opposite onsets of *prophane infidels* on the left hand, and *enthusiastical religionists* on the right. I humbly hope, that our governors will always so avoid one extreme, as not to run into the other; and that, at this time, they will so guard against the very appearances of irreligion and immorality, as to leave Dr. Price, so far

as in them lies, no room to injure our cause by arguments taken from our want of devotion and of a strict regard to sound morals. What we owe to God, to ourselves, and to the Colonists, calls upon us to remove whatever may give any just offence to those who seek occasion to reflect upon us. The Colonists narrowly watch us: Let their keen inspection make us look to ourselves.' &c.

'Should we have given them any just ground of complaint, it becomes us to remove it with all speed: setting our seal to the noble maxim, which Dr. Price advances after Lord Chatham; *Rectitude is dignity. Oppression only is meanness; and justice, honour.*

'*Righteousness exalteth a nation*, says the wise man, *but sin is a reproach to any people*, and may prove the ruin of the most powerful empire. Violence brought on the deluge. Luxury overthrew Sodom. Cruel usage of the Israelites destroyed Egypt. Complete wickedness caused the extirpation of the Canaanites. Imperiousness, and an abuse of the power of taxation, rent ten tribes from the kingdom of Judah. Pride sunk Babylon. Nineveh and Jerusalem, by timely repentance, once reversed their awful doom; but returning to their former sins, they shared at last the fate of all the states, which have *filled up the measure of their iniquities*.—And have we taken so few strides towards that awful period, as to render national repentance needless in this day of trouble? By fomenting contentions and wars among the natives of Africa, in order to buy the prisoners whom they take from each other; have not some of our countrymen turned Africa into a field of blood? Do not the sighs of myriads of innocent negroes unjustly transported from their native country to the British dominions, call night and day for vengeance upon us; whilst their groans upbraid the hypocritical friends of liberty, who buy, and sell, and whip their fellow men as if they were brutes; and absurdly

furdly complain that *they* are enslaved, when it is they themselves, who deal in the liberties and bodies of men, as graziers do in the liberties and bodies of oxen?"

"And is what I beg leave to call our *Nabob-trade* in the *East*, more consistent with humanity, than our *slave-trade* in the *South* and *West*? Who can tell how many myriads of men have been cut off in the East Indies by famine or wars, which had their rise from the ambition, covetousness, and cruelty of some of our countrymen? And if no vindictive notice has been taken of these barbarous and bloody scenes, has not the nation made them in some degree her own? And does not that innocent blood, the price of which has been imported with impunity, and now circulates through the kingdom to feed our luxury—does not all that blood, I say, speak louder for vengeance against us, than the blood of Abel did against his murderous brother?—" The justice of the nation, says Dr. Price, has slept over these enormities: Will the justice of heaven sleep?"—No: but it still patiently waits for our reformation; nor will it, I hope, wait in vain; but if it does, the suspended blow will in the end descend with redoubled force, and strike us with aggravated ruin. For God will be avenged on all impenitent nations: He has one rule for them and for individuals: *Except they repent*, says Christ himself, *they shall all likewise perish.*"

"Let our *devotion* be improved by the American controversy, as well as our *morals*. Instead of " *scoffing at religion*," as Dr. Price says we do, let us honour the piety of the Colonists. So far at least, as their religious professions are consistent, sincere, and scriptural, let them provoke us to a rational concern for the glory of God, and our eternal interests. Were we to contend with our American Colonies for *supremacy* in VIRTUE and DEVOTION, how noble would be the strife! How worthy of

of a protestant kingdom, and a mother-country ! And does not political wisdom, as well as brotherly love, require us to do something in order to root up their inveterate prejudices against us and our church ? Have we forgotten that many of the first Colonists crossed the Atlantic for conscience' sake ; seeking in the woods of America, some, a shelter against our once persecuting hierarchy ; and others, a refuge from our epidemical prophaneness ? And does not their offspring look upon us in the same odious light, in which Dr. Price places us ? Do they not abhor or despise us, as impious, immoral men, "*enervated by luxury* ;"—men, with whom it is dangerous to be connected, and who "*may expect calamities, that shall recover to reflection*" [perhaps to DEVOTION] "*Libertines and Atheists*" themselves ?

‘ And is it only for God’s sake, for the sake of our own souls, and for the sake of the Colonists, that we should look to our conduct and christian profession ? Are there not multitudes of rash religionists in the kingdom, who suppose that all the praying people in England are for the Americans, and who warmly espouse their part, merely because they are told, that the Colonists "*fast and pray*," while "*we forget every thing serious and decent*," and because prejudiced teachers confidently ask, with Dr. Price, "*Which side is providence likely to favour ?*"—Would to God all our legislators felt the weight of this objection, which can as easily mislead moral and religious people in the present age, as it did in the last ! Would to God they exerted themselves in such a manner, that all unprejudiced men might see, the king and parliament have "*the better men*," as well as "*the better cause* !" Would to God, that by timely reformation, and solemn addresses to the throne of grace, we might convince Dr. Price and all the Americans, that in submitting to the British legislature, they will not submit to *libertinism* and *atheism* ;
but

But to a venerable body of virtuous and godly senators, who know that the first care of *God's* representatives on earth—the principal study of political *gods*, should be to promote *God's* fear, by setting a good example before the people committed to their charge, and by steadily enforcing the observance of the moral law !

‘ These are some of the reflections, which Dr. Price’s *religious* argument has drawn from my pen, and which I doubt not but some of our Governors have already made by the help of that wisdom, which prompts them to improve our former calamities, and to study what may promote our happiness in church and state.’

The royal proclamation, which has been lately issued out, shews that the hopes expressed in the preceding lines were well-grounded. The heart of every good, unprejudiced man, must rejoice at reading this truly christian decree:—‘ We, &c. command that a public fast and humiliation be observed throughout England upon Friday Dec. 13. that so both we and our people may humble ourselves before almighty God, in order to obtain pardon of our sins ; and may in the most devout and solemn manner send up our prayers and supplications to the divine Majesty for averting those heavy judgments, which our manifold sins and provocations have justly deserved ; and for imploring his intervention and blessing speedily to deliver our loyal subjects.’ &c. . . . The Sovereign acts herein the part of a Christian Prince and of a wise Politician. As a Christian Prince, he enforces the capital duty of National Repentance ; and as a wise Politician, he averts the most formidable stroke which Doctor Price has aimed at his government. May we second his laudable designs by acting the part of penitent sinners and loyal subjects ; tho’ mistaken patriots should pour floods of contempt upon us on the occasion.

It would be strange, if an appointment, which has a direct tendency to promote piety, to increase loyalty, and to baffle the endeavours of a disappointed party, met with no opposition. If we solemnly keep the fast, we must expect to be ridiculed by the men, who imagine that liberty consists in the neglect of God's law, and the contempt of the king's authority. The warm men who have publickly asserted, that his last speech from the throne is full of *insincerity*, daily insinuate that his proclamation is full of *hypocrisy*, and that it will be as wrong in you to ask a blessing upon his arms, as to desire the Almighty to bless the arms of robbers and murderers. Nor are there few good men among us, who think that it is absolutely inconsistent with christianity to draw the sword and proclaim a fast.

Lest the insinuations of such patriots and professors should cast a damp upon your devotion, and make you leave the field of national prayer to our revolted colonies, I beg leave to remind you of a similar case, in which God testified his approbation of a fast connected with a fight ; yea, with a bloody civil-war.

We read in the book of *Judges*, that *certain sons of Belial*, belonging to the city of *Gibeab* in the land of Benjamin, *beset a house* ; obliged a Levite who lodged there, to *bring forth his concubine to them ; and they knew her, and abused her all night*, in such a manner that *she died* in the morning. The Levite complained of this cruel usage to the eleven tribes. *All the men of Israel were gathered on this occasion, against the inhospitable city of Gibeab, and sent men thro' all the tribe of Benjamin saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you ? Now therefore deliver us the sons of Belial, who are in Gibeab, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin [instead of condescending to this just request] gathered themselves together unto Gibeab, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.* Judg. xix. 20.

Let us apply this first part of the story to the immediate cause of the bloodshed, which stains the fields of British America, and we shall have the following state of the case. *Certain sons of Belial*, belonging to the city of *Boston*, beset a ship in the night, overpowered the crew, and feloniously destroyed her rich cargo. The Government was informed, that this felonious deed had been concerted by some of the principal inhabitants of *Boston*, and executed by their emissaries; and being justly incensed against the numerous rioters, it requested the unjust city to make up the loss sustained by the owners of the plundered ship, or to deliver up the sons of Belial who had so audaciously broken the laws of the land; and a military force was sent to block up the port of *Boston*, till the Sovereign's just request should be granted. The other Colonists, instead of using their interest with the obstinate inhabitants of *Boston* to make them do this act of loyalty and justice, *gathered themselves together unto Boston to go out to battle against the sons of Great-Britain*, and by taking up arms against the king to protect felons, made themselves guilty both of felony and high treason.

Return we now to the children of Israel, and let us see if God forbid them to bring their obstinate brethren to reason by the force of arms, and considered the prayers made to him, on this occasion, as improper and hypocritical. *The children of Israel* (says the historian) *arose and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin? And the Lord* [instead of blaming their design] *said, Judah shall go up first.* In consequence of this direction, Judah marched up to the enemy. But alas! the righteousness of a cause, and the divine approbation, do not always ensure success to those who fight in the cause of virtue. Judah lost the day and 22000 men. *The children of Israel*, greatly affected with this misfortune, *went up and wept*

wept before the Lord until even, and asked counsel of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up [a second time] to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the Lord said, Go up against him. Judges xx. 23. However they were as unsuccessful in the second engagement, as they had been in the first. Then all the children of Israel, and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat before the Lord, and FASTED that day until even. And the children of Israel enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the Lord said, GO UP; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand. And accordingly the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel. Judges xx. 26, &c. And the few Benjamites that escaped the edge of the vindictive sword, lamented the obstinacy, with which their infatuated tribe had taken up arms for the sons of Belial, who had beset the house, in the inhospitable city of Gibeab.—And so will the revolted Colonies one day bemoan the perverseness, with which their infatuated leaders have made them fight for the sons of Belial, who beset the ship in the inhospitable harbour of Boston.

To return; From the preceding scriptural account, it evidently appears: (1) That God allows, yea commands the sword to be drawn for the punishment of daring felons, and of the infatuated people who bear arms in their defence, as the Benjamites formerly did, and as the revolted Colonies actually do. (2) That, in this case, a sister-tribe may conscientiously draw the sword against an obstinate sister-tribe; much more a parent-state against an obstinate colony, and a King against rebellious subjects: (3) That Providence, to try the patience of those who are in the right, may permit that they should suffer great losses: (4) That whilst the maintainers of order and justice draw the sword to check daring licentiousness, it is their duty to go up unto the house of God, and to weep and fast before the Lord:

(5) That

(5) That God makes a difference between the enthusiastical abettors of felonious practices, who fast to *smite* their brethren and rulers *with the fist of wickedness*; and the steady governors, who, together with their people, fast to smite the wicked *with the sceptre of righteousness*: And that, whilst God testifies his abhorrence of the former fast, he shews that the latter ranks among the *fasts which he has chosen*; the end of true fasting being to repress evil *without us*, as well as *within us*: And lastly, that, although no war is so dreadful as a civil war, yet when God is consulted three times following, all his answers shew, that the most bloody civil war is preferable to the horrible consequences of daring anarchy; and that it is better to maintain order and execute justice with the loss of thousands of soldiers, than to let the mobbing sons of Belial break into ships or houses, to commit with impunity all the crimes which their lust, rapaciousness, and ferocity prompt them to.

Now if *fasting* and drawing the sword of justice, are duties consistent with scriptural religion; it follows, that *praying* and using *that* sword are compatible ordinances. To be convinced of it, you need only consider the following scripture. ‘Moses said to Joshua, Chuse us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek. Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand’ [*in earnest prayer*] ‘that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’s hands were heavy, and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, and his hands were steady till the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people, with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said to Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book.’
Exod. xvii. 9, &c.

But

" But supposing war and blood-shed were allowed under the Jewish dispensation, are they not absolutely forbidden under the gospel? Is not Christ *the Prince of peace*, and his gospel *the Gospel of peace*? And is it not said, that men *shall neither hurt nor destroy in God's holy mountain*? How then can we suppose that drawing the sword, and fasting on that occasion, can be evangelical duties?"

This objection is specious, and deserves a full answer.

(1) Our Lord, who said to his apostles, that a kind of raging spirit *goeth not out but by fasting and prayer*, said also to them, *He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said, It is enough.* Luke xxii. 36, 38. I grant, that when *Peter drew his sword, and [rashly] struck a servant of the high-priest, Jesus said unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword [to use it rashly as thou dost, without any order, and without the least probability of success] shall perish with the sword.* Matt. xxvi. 52. From the whole of this evangelical account it appears, that our Lord allows his followers the use of the sword; and that he only blames it when it is precipitate, and likely to answer no other end than that of throwing the triumphant friends of vice into a greater rage.

(2) If indeed all men were Christians, and every nominal Christian was *led by the Spirit of Christ*, there would be absolutely no need of the sword; for there would be nothing but justice, truth, and love in the world. But reason dictates, that, so long as the wicked shall use the sword in support of vice, the righteous, who are in power, must use it in defence of virtue. *The Lord of hosts, and Captain of our salvation, who girds his two-edged sword upon his thigh, or causes it to proceed out of his mouth, to devour the wicked—this righteous lion of the tribe of Judah, will never suffer Satan and his servants*
so

so to bear the sword, as to engross the use of it. This would be letting them have *the kingdom, the power, and the glory*, without controul.

(3) The Psalms and Revelation are full of prophecies concerning the righteous wars, which the godly will wage against the wicked, before iniquity is rooted out of the earth. When the place of the ungodly shall know them no more, and *righteousness shall cover the earth, as the waters do the sea*, Isaiah's prophecy shall be fulfilled. *It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow into it. The Lord shall then judge among the nations, &c. and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* Is. ii. 2, 4. But till this happy time come, when one nation, or one part of a nation unjustly rises up against another, as the men of Boston did against our merchants, it will be needful to oppose righteous force to unrighteous violence. It is absurd therefore to measure the duty of the christians who live among lawless men, by the duty of the christians, who shall live when all lawless men shall have been destroyed.

(4) If Michael and his angels could fight in heaven against the dragon and his angels, I do not see why general Howe could not fight on earth against general Lee. And if the Congress unsheathes the sword to protect felons, to redress the imaginary grievance of an insignificant tax, and to load thousands of the King's loyal subjects with grievances too heavy to be borne; it is hard to say, why he and his parliament should not use the sword to redress these real grievances, and to assert the liberty of our American fellow-subjects, who groan under the tyranny of republican despotism.

(5) St. Paul, who knew the gospel better than English mystics and American patriots, asserts the lawfulness of using the sword in order to maintain good government and execute justice. Hear his
doc-

ctrine. “ *The Ruler is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God,*” [of that God who says, *If ye be obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword,* II. i. 19, 20. And, of consequence, he is] “ *a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.* Rom. xiii. 4. Hence it appears, that the King is entrusted with the sword, and that if he does not use it, *to execute wrath upon criminals, he bears the sword in vain*, and defeats one of the capital ends of his coronation: for *Governors are sent by God for the punishment of evil doers,* 1 Pet. ii. 14.

(6) Some people rejoice, that we have watch-men to guard our streets, constables to apprehend house-breakers, jailors to confine high-way-men, and executioners to put them to death. And yet they blame the use of an army. Is not their conduct, in this respect, highly unreasonable? For, after all, what are soldiers but royal watch-men, royal constables, royal jailors; and, if need be, royal executioners? If it be lawful to place watch-men, in long white coats, at the corners of our streets, for public security; why should it be unlawful to place there watch-men in red coats, for the same good purpose? If it be right to send an unarmed constable, with a justice's warrant, against an unarmed outlaw, or a defenceless debtor; can it be wrong to send thirty thousand armed constables, with the Sovereign's warrant, to disarm a countless multitude of lawless men, who assume the supreme power of the sword, with as much propriety as the Pope does the power of the keys of heaven and hell? Again, if it be not contrary to christianity, to put under a jailor's care a number of dangerous men, who have already disturbed the public peace, and who seem bent upon doing it again; why should it be deemed contrary to Christ's religion, to check, by a military guard, a dangerous city, or province, which has forfeited its former liberty,
by

by adding the guilt of felonious and treasonable practices, to that of daring licentiousness? Once more: if the king, by signing a death-warrant, can justly commission a sheriff, and an executioner, to take away the life of an house-breaker, or of a man who has presented a pistol to you, on the high way; why can he not, by the advice of his council and parliament, give to his generals and soldiers a commission to shoot lawless men, who have broken into a ship, to destroy the property of his loyal subjects, or have taken up arms in defence of the men, that committed this crime; and who, instead of presenting a pistol to an individual, to rob him of a few shillings, have brought large trains of artillery into the field, to kill the embodied officers of justice, who bear the Ruler's sword, and to rob the King himself of some of the brightest jewels of his crown? If you attend to these hints, you will not find fault with our Sovereign for shewing, that *he does not bear the sword in vain*: and you will praise him, if you consider, that the first commission, which he has given to the commanders of his forces, is a commission to offer gracious terms of peace to those very men, who, by wantonly shedding the blood of his loyal subjects, and by repeatedly pouring floods of contempt upon his sacred person, have forfeited all just pretensions to his royal favour.

(7) Soldiers, like watch-men, jailors, and executioners, are a needful burden upon the public. I heartily wish, we were virtuous enough to do without them: but as this is not the case, they are a strong, bitter, and costly remedy, which is absolutely necessary to prevent or cure our licentiousness. So long as human bodies shall want to be preserved by the amputation of painful, mortifying limbs, we shall want surgeons: And so long as political bodies shall be in danger of being destroyed by the moral corruption of their members, we shall want soldiers to do bloody operations.

May

May the Lord grant us a constant succession of wise, conscientious, mild, and yet steady Rulers, who may never *bear the sword in vain*; and who may never use it but with the same tenderness, with which a surgeon uses his knife, when he cuts a mortified limb from the body of a beloved child. His heart bleeds, while the dreadful operation is performed; and yet his judicious, parental affection makes him consent to sacrifice a part of his son's body, in order to prevent the destruction of the whole. As punishing is God's *strange work*, so should it be that of governors, who are his political representatives. Wo to the man, who, to shew that he has power to use a knife, WANTONLY cuts his own flesh! And wo to the Ruler, who, to make appear, that he *bears the sword*, butchers his LOYAL subjects, and WANTONLY cuts off the SOUND limbs of the political body, of which he is the head! A crime, which no candid person can lay to the charge of our mild Sovereign.

To conclude: If Christianity prohibited fighting for the execution of justice, the continuance of peace, and the support of good government; when penitent soldiers asked John the Baptist, *What shall we do?* he would undoubtedly have intimated, that they should renounce their bloody profession, as soon as they could. But, instead of doing it, he charged them to *do violence* [or injustice] *to no man*, and to *be content with their wages*; a direction which amounted to bidding them continue to serve their country, by helping the Ruler not to *bear the sword in vain*. Nor was our Lord of a different mind from his forerunner: for he praised a centurion, or captain in the Roman army, declaring he *had not found such faith in Israel*, as he discovered in that gentile: and he parted from him, as Peter afterwards did from Cornelius and his devout soldiers, without giving him the least hint, that his profession was unlawful. From the whole I infer, that if Christianity allow a man to be a soldier,
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it allows him *to fight* for the maintainance of order. And, if it be lawful to fight for this purpose, it must be lawful, nay, it is highly necessary, *to fast and pray* before an engagement. For the greater is the temptation of soldiers to indulge uncharitable tempers, the more earnestly ought they to pray, that they may fight in the same spirit of love, in which Christ was, when he uttered his last woe against rebellious Jerusalem. *He beheld the obstinate city, wept over it, and pronounced its awful doom: Thine enemies shall lay thee even with the ground, and shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.*

Nor should soldiers fast and pray alone. We ought to bear a part in the solemn duty; because our sins have helped to fill up the measure of the national guilt, which has provoked God to permit the Colonists to rise against us. We owe much to the gentlemen of the fleet and army. Whilst they lift up the sword, which lingering justice has reluctantly drawn; whilst they stand between us and the desperate men, who break into our ships, set fire to their own houses, tar, feather, goog†, and scalp their captives; whip, cut, and torture their slaves: and whilst they expose their lives, by sea and land, for our protection, or [which comes to the same thing] for the defence of the government that protects us; it is our bounden duty to feel for them, and to bear them on our hearts. Nay, we shall be guilty of inconsideration, uncharitableness, and base ingratitude, if we do not hold up their hands, by lifting up our own to the Lord of hosts in their behalf, and by asking, that neither prophaneness, lewdness, intemperance, nor cruelty, may stain their laurels; and that they may all be endued with every virtue, which can draw the love of their enemies, and fit them to live or die as faithful foldiers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor should we fast only with an eye to ourselves, and those who fight our battles. We ought also to do it out of regard to our American brethren. If they

† A kind of American torture, which consists in wrenching a man's eyes out of their sockets.

they act at this time the part of *enemies*, does not our Lord say, *Love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you?* Should we not remember, that British blood flows in their veins—that they are not *all* guilty—that many of them have been deceived by the plausible and lying speeches of some of their leaders—that the epidemical fever of wild patriotism seized multitudes before they were aware of its dreadful consequences—and that numbers of them already repent of their rashness; earnestly wishing for an opportunity of returning with safety to their former allegiance?

If you consider these favourable circumstances, you will be glad to have an opportunity of solemnly approaching the throne of grace in behalf of your unhappy brethren: You will intercede for them with an heart full of forgiving love, and christian sympathy. You will ardently pray, that God would open the eyes and turn the hearts of the Congress-men, and their military adherents; that he would fill the breast of the King, and of all who are in authority under him, with every virtue, which can render his steady and mild government acceptable to the most discontented of his subjects; and that, on both sides of the Atlantic, all persons in power may cheerfully use all their influence to promote the speedy reconciliation, and lasting union we wish for.

Should piety, loyalty, and charity, thus animate your prayers; our day of fasting and humiliation will infallibly usher in a day of praise and general thanksgiving; and the eloquent Senator, who, in the house of commons lately condemned the religious appointment which I vindicate, will himself partake of the universal joy, and be sorry to have declaimed against a royal proclamation, which so justly deserves his assent, concurrence, and praises.

I am,

My dear fellow-subjects

Your obedient servant,

LONDON, Dec. 23 00 62 JOHN FLETCHER,
1776.